

Thos. Jefferson -- A Shibboleth.

So far as existing political conditions confront us one might say well-nigh whatever he pleased in an effort to suggest a shibboleth by which the identity of those claiming to be disciples of Thomas Jefferson could be established; and in applying the test not only 40,000 are likely to be slain, as there were of unfortunate Ephraimites, who, as to the word "shibboleth" and in the language of the Bible, "could not frame to pronounce it right," but a mightier host claiming equally with the slayers to be the true followers of that statesman and philosopher. By those that stand afar off and watch the fraternal slaughter of contending Democratic factions, it might be suggested that the adopted methods of extermination are wholly at variance with the result sought to be accomplished. They might declare also that more suited to the task of extinction were a Samson and the instrument wielded by him in his famed assault upon the Philistines; for truly, no weapon ever devised is fitter to be used among the antagonistic professors of the name of Jefferson than the jaw bone of an ass. Let it not be inferred that I hold this singular weapon in any way to have fallen into disuse. The gathering in this city on Monday night—no less than similar gatherings elsewhere—manifestly disproves such an assumption.

And why? Because alleged Democrats call upon a patron saint for support, yet they deny him in spirit. Not what Thomas Jefferson was should command our reverence so much as that which he battled for in the hour of dire necessity and great trial. The things he contended for when he lived it were childish to assume would be those he would advocate today. He fought for the needs of his own hour. Jefferson was not tied to the tail end nor hopelessly stuck in the middle of preceding centuries.

While we confess that the world does move, yet by our actions "we contradict the very things we teach." Each day involves new duties. Each age marks new epochs of thought and inspiration. What hedges mankind about is the idolatrous worship of ideals from which the living spirit has fled. There is as much inspiration in a mummy as in some of the so-called principles to which we adhere with a lip devotion that death only seems capable of ending.

Thomas Jefferson gave it as his opinion that there should be a revolution every twenty years. Was this because the man was bloodthirsty? No one believes it. This utterance, expressed in other language only the thought immortalized by Patrick Henry when he declared "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty." There is an interminable strife between the welfare of the many and the desires of the few. Like a law of nature self-interest never rests. Unceasingly and insiduously it seeks for itself. Slowly, yet unfalteringly, it pursues its steadfast course; little by little it achieves its growing ends; noiselessly it undermines the foundation of the edifice erected by the fathers for the preservation of all their children.

Students of Jefferson will recall that one of his great fears for the perpetuation of the Republic was because of the disposition of the Supreme Court of the nation, seen in his own day, to usurp the functions of the legislative branch of government. How many Democratic lawyers are there now, despite the realization of the statesman's worst apprehensions, that share his dread of the aggressions and assumptions of the judicial body in question though all are free enough to give lip praise to his memory and philosophy.

Since the civil war money has become the dominant force in nearly all our relations. Besides the courts, Jefferson was alarmed because of the banks, and dreaded the tendencies growing out of slavery. The slavery question has been settled with a loss of life and a desolation that can never be compensated for. The record of the Supreme Court of the nation is as free a confession of Jefferson's prescience as could be desired; while the power of money has become so flagrant and unabashed that one's sanity is practically questioned if his knee is not ever ready to bow to this old yet eternally rejuvenated Baal. Statesmen have come to view the possession of wealth as signifying prosperity (Heavens help us!), to many churchmen it is looked upon as salvation; while fathers speak of it before their children as though it meant honor! How can upright men tolerate all this and at the same time lift their voices in praise of a man, the prayer of whose heart was that ours might be a land in which there should be no extremely rich and no abjectly poor?

Let it be borne well in upon the mind that truth is ever compelled to fight for recognition.

Arrayed against its acceptance are man's indifference and all the vulgar traditions of a past to which by temperament, age and superficial self-interest he has become anchored as to an immovable rock. We are ready to concede that fresh aspirations are continually arising, and that these aspirations exact new obligations; yet while this much is freely granted we persist nevertheless in a determination to analyze the new elements with old solvents. And we fail, as we have always failed. Elements that are really new demand other reagents than those previously employed in order that a rational solution may be had. This day, in our land at least, sees in industrial disturbances and unrest the pressing issues of the hour. These issues involve what we call the trusts, the employment of natural monopolies to private advantage, the ownership of the mind vastly more perceptive and analytical than God has given to me who can discern any fundamental difference in the methods proposed either by the Republican or the Democratic party to means of production, and the methods of the distribution of that which the labor of man has produced. With a desire not to deceive yourselves, let each person state frankly what distinction there is on these vital questions between the great political parties of the day. He has a meet these issues and solve them. Any distinction that may superficially appear are as the differences between twee-dee-dee and twee-dle-dum. And that there should be no fundamental variation respecting the remedies proposed is only natural for the reason that the mind of man invariably inclines to the old solvents that have been tried, time and again, ever since caste appeared among the children of men because some were possessed of greater wealth than their fellows.

He reads the history of man's world to little purpose. Who has not learned that the centralization of a nation's wealth in the hands of a few has invariably preceded the downfall of that nation. Hence Jefferson's hope that this might be a land in which there should be no extremely rich and no abjectly poor, expressed, simply and in another form, his heart's desire for the perpetuity of the Republic. Despite the fact that history offers no exception to the fact law above stated, the struggle of all civilized nations is for a greater and still greater wealth—no matter how

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